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## International Aid

APPROVED FOR RELEASE

### The International Refugee Problem (U)

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#### Summary

Most refugees originate in developing countries. They are the unhappy byproducts of war, civil unrest, and social and economic uncertainty. A recent estimate of global refugees places the number of people currently in need of protection by, and care and maintenance from, the international community at 7.7 million. This figure excludes those who receive assistance from national or local rather than international sources and those who have means of their own. The cost of these refugee movements is large; the United States spent more than \$1 billion in 1983. (U)

Despite recent success in coping with the problems of some refugees in Southeast Asia and Africa, we expect the problems of refugee movements and the need for assistance to continue at near current levels. Central America remains the most likely area for a rapid increase in refugees. (U)

The economic, social, and political costs associated with the refugee situation are enormous. At least 11 million people are currently seeking refuge outside their own countries—victims of war or political and cultural persecution. Of this number, the State Department identifies more than 7.7 million as requiring protection and assistance from the international community. As compared with a small number of European nations after World War II, there are now 33 countries—mostly in the Third World—that are the principal sources of the world's refugees. By far the largest is Afghanistan, with 3.4 to 4.5 million of its citizens having fled to Pakistan and Iran.

On an individual level, the toll levied in human misery can barely be comprehended. Fear, malnutrition, disease, and death are both the precipitators and constant companions of refugee flight. Refugee movements can also work hardships at the national level.

The generating countries inevitably lose valuable human capital when their citizens flee abroad, and for receiving countries the advent of refugees, especially those of different ethnic backgrounds, is often an unexpected and unwelcome event. (U)

#### Regional Survey

**South Asia.** The Marxist coup in Afghanistan in 1978 followed by the Soviet invasion and the subsequent war between USSR/Democratic Republic of Afghanistan forces and the Mujahedin freedom fighters have created the largest current refugee population in the world. Fleeing from political repression, the threat of religious persecution, and the ravages of war, an estimated 3 million Afghans have found sanctuary in

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*The 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*

*This convention defines a refugee as a person who, "... owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion is outside the country of his nationality (or habitual residence) and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." Despite a 1961 General Assembly resolution that extends this definition by encouraging the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees "to pursue his activities on behalf of refugees within his mandate or those for whom he extends his good offices," the definition of refugees remains a highly restrictive one and does not include millions of internally displaced persons who have fled persecution or the ravages of war, but have not crossed an international boundary. (U)*

Pakistan and perhaps an additional 1.5 million are in Iran. The prospects for peace and successful large-scale repatriation will remain slight unless the Soviets withdraw and an Islamic government acceptable to the refugees and the Mujahedin is established in Kabul. These conditions seem unlikely in the near future, and the Afghan refugee populations probably will remain in asylum and continue to increase.

Elsewhere in the region, communal animosities in Pakistan, India, and Sri Lanka pose a constant threat to public order. The recent communal riots in Assam and Sri Lanka underscore the potential of this threat. Religious, racial, and economic jealousies are likely to spark renewed violence producing heavy refugee flows.

**East Asia.** Since the fall of Saigon in April of 1975, Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea have been the primary sources of refugees in East Asia. Under Hanoi's direction the restructuring of these societies along traditional Marxist-Leninist lines has severely restricted individual freedom and systematically persecuted many of those who were associated with former regimes or with the US effort in Indochina. In

**Table 1**  
**Number of Refugees Requiring Protection and Assistance in Principal Generating Countries \***

<b>Africa</b>	
Angola	273,000
Burundi	160,000
Ethiopia	833,100
Namibia	74,800
Rwanda	102,000
Uganda	287,000
Zaire	51,400
<b>East Asia</b>	
Kampuchea	98,000
Laos	75,800
Vietnam	49,700
<b>Latin America</b>	
Chile	30,000
El Salvador	63,700
Guatemala	41,500
Nicaragua	77,000
<b>Near East</b>	
Iraq	100,000
Palestinians	1,954,000
Western Sahara	50,000
<b>South Asia</b>	
Afghanistan	3,400,000-4,500,000
<b>Europe</b>	
Eastern Europe-USSR	100,000+

\* Because of the difficulties associated with defining and enumerating refugees, these figures represent only one of several estimates and should be regarded as orders of magnitude.

Source: Country Reports on the World Refugee Situation, Report to the Congress for Fiscal Year 1984, Department of State.

This table is Unclassified.

addition, armed conflict between Vietnam and resistance forces continues in Kampuchea, presenting a constant threat to large numbers of Kampuchean civilians. As a consequence, more than 1.5 million refugees have fled Indochina since 1975. The flow has

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**Table 2**  
**Number of Refugees Requiring Protection**  
**and Assistance in Principal**  
**Asylum Countries \***

<b>Africa</b>	
Angola	96,200
Burundi	58,000
Djibouti	31,500
Rwanda	45,000
Somalia	400,000
Sudan	600,000
Tanzania	168,700
Zaire	269,400
Zimbabwe	88,000
<b>East Asia</b>	
Hong Kong	13,600
Indonesia	9,282
Malaysia	11,500
Philippines	17,180
Thailand	144,700
Vietnam	30,000
<b>Latin America</b>	
Costa Rica	36,000
Honduras	45,600
Mexico	45,500
Nicaragua	18,000
<b>Near East</b>	
Algeria	54,000
Iran	560,000-1,500,000
Jordan	759,000
Lebanon	246,500
Syria	225,000
Gaza Strip	381,000
West Bank	345,000
<b>South Asia</b>	
Pakistan	2,900,000
<b>Europe</b>	
Austria	10,000
Italy	10,000

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